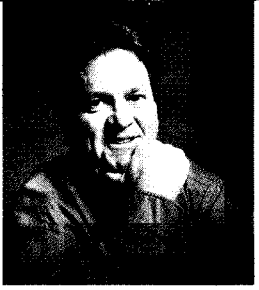


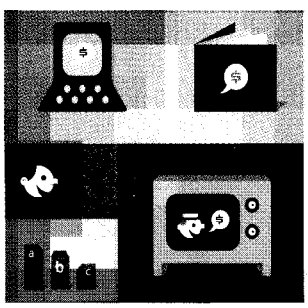
Netwatch

By Jim Carroll

Your guide to business & accounting on the Internet

Courting the Net generation

What will happen to the profession when the Internet-linked, Nintendo-weaned, hyper-connected kids of today become the CAs of tomorrow? Recruitment and career challenges of a degree we have never seen before. Professional services firms will find the traditional partnership-based model coming under attack because the next generation will base its career decisions on lifestyle. Simply put, many of them will not want to work within the workplace/employee model, putting in the standard hours from a traditional office, because they understand that technology and connectivity permit them to work in ways that have not previously been possible. There's a simple reason for this — they have grown up in a world that is collaborative by nature, connected by design and interactive by default.



They'll want to earn their stripes working with a degree of freedom and work/life balance likely to shock many within the old-guard firms. Professional firms and corporations will need to become more comfortable with alternative working relationships involving telecommuting, work-at-home programs and collaborative partnerships with staff who are not employees, but who float from project to project on a part-time basis. A good starting point is the website About, which has an Alternative Work Arrangements page.

I certainly speak of a lifestyle-driven career from personal experience — I've been working out of a home office for 15 years, having established my own unique brand of services through my company. My wife, Christa, also a CA, quit her job with a major consumer goods company a decade ago and joined me to help out.

The key driving factor behind this unique professional decision was lifestyle, freedom and family. We've been richly blessed with the opportunity to run a successful business while raising our children. Every morning, rather than suffering the frustrations of a morning commute, I have breakfast with my sons.

I believe there are an ever-increasing number of professionals, such as Christa and me, who have abandoned the traditional workplace model for something better. Our day-to-day activities and career goals are driven by a unique attitude and perspective on what a "career" is: that life comes before work.

And I believe this type of lifestyle decision will come to rock the foundation of the partnership and corporate organization of the future as the next generation enters the profession. They've learned the benefit of connectivity and discovered that location is quite irrelevant in an era of global networking. We will see millions within this generation make a choice in which lifestyle comes first, and work and career come second.

That's why it is important that everyone start thinking about how the world of work and the concept of the career is changing. To do that, you should take the time to understand the unique cultural, social and workplace challenges involved with telecommuting and other non-traditional work relationships. There are many such resources online; one is the Network World Fusion's Telework Beat, which reports on specific teleworking trends and issues. Then there is the Future of Work Weblog, which tracks news and developments with respect to non-traditional working relationships.

Jim Carroll, FCA, is a well-known speaker, author and columnist. Reach him at jcarroll@jimcarroll.com or log on to his website at www.jimcarroll.com

INFO ON NEW WORKPLACE MODELS

Network World Fusion Telework Beat
www.nwfusion.com/net.worker/columnists/kistner.html

The Future of Work Weblog
www.thefutureofwork.net/blog

About: Alternative Work Arrangements
http://careerplanning.about.com/library/weekly/aa062198.htm